

INTELLIGENCE AND BUILDING OF DEMOCRACY IN JORDAN

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The relationship between democracy and the character of secret intelligence presents a composite two-sided puzzle. On the one side, the very concept of democracy demands that an intelligence agency serves democratic interests by providing one country's security and preparedness against potential threats both internal and external. The core notion is that a stronger country can turn itself into a heaven where democracy can continue to be practiced. On the other side, intelligence investigative methods in many countries occur outside the context of democratic control and oversight mechanisms, thus surfacing an inherent conflict.

That said the role of intelligence in the building of democracy and political stability in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is crucial. Jordan, strategically located in the Middle East, presents a long-run import-export relationship. On the one hand, Jordan, a country of few natural resources, imports oil products and natural gas to meet its energy needs. On the other hand, Jordan exports a valuable resource which is security in terms of intelligence, geographic security, and stability.

Jordanian General Intelligence Department's (GID's), *Dairat al Mukhabarat*, primary objective is to defend Jordan from internal and external threats that target its political stability, violate its sovereignty, or undermine the security of its people. The focus of GID's operations is the collection of intelligence pertaining to security issues within the Middle East, including surveillance of paramilitary groups and guarding borders to prevent an influx of terrorists from the wider region.

The agency is accountable to ministerial control, but in practice reports to the King briefing him on matters of national security. The GID also provides the Prime Minister with regular analyses of the kingdom's political climate, and is committed to preserving the power of the Jordanian constitution when executing its duties.

GID's Role in Democracy: Justice, Human Rights and Transparency

Justice, transparency, the respect of human rights and security are key ingredients to build accountability, trust and stability, which are necessary for the functioning of democracies and market economies. The GID has been at the forefront of efforts to consolidate Jordan's architecture of democracy making the safeguard of these ingredients a cornerstone of its mission.

To start, Jordan's intelligence agency fully recognizes the International Declaration of Human rights and the United Nations Convention against Torture. The detainment quarters of the agency meet internationally approved standards and are recognized as an official state prison making it accessible for inspection and review, in accordance with the "Jordanian Prison Administration laws."

On Justice, the Jordanian Constitution provides that the judiciary is an independent power and divides courts into three types: regular courts, religious courts, and special courts. The Military Council of the GID falls in the third type of courts. Specifically, in accordance with Law 24 of 1964 on the General Intelligence Department (the so-called "GID Law"), the Intelligence Director appoints members of the Military Council and ratifies its decisions that pertain to officers and members of the GID. Judgments of the said Council are considered as final and are not open to any means of contestation.

The relationship between the intelligence agency and the judiciary as key-component of democracy is solid. The public prosecution at the State Security Court, constituted by the Prime Minister, normally issues warrants and provide them to the General Intelligence Department for the detainment of individuals connected to terrorism. The conviction of ringleaders of terrorist plots that originate from neighboring countries like Iraq that has turned into a terrorist-export factory is crucial part of the judicial-intelligence partnership to maintain internal stability, prerequisite for Jordan's democratic evolution. An identical case of the intelligence-judicial cooperation is the conviction of an attempted suicide bomber who took part in the 2005 Amman bombings in Jordan but survived, when her explosive belt failed to detonate.

The GID also leads the national fight against corruption in all its forms, perceiving the phenomenon of corruption as major obstacle to the kingdom's democratic and economic development. In this regard, the GID has incorporated the anti-corruption directorate that was set up in 1996 and conducts secret investigations of corruption cases and collects relevant data, disrupts corrupt practices, makes referrals to the public prosecutor, and eventually to civil courts when sufficient evidence is available.

Senior members of the GID are not immune to secret investigations for corruption practices. In a self-cleansing process, the GID's former head Mohammad Dhahabi for the period of 2005-2008 was sentenced to 13 years in prison on charges of embezzling public funds, money laundering and abuse of office. Also in practice, the Anti-Corruption Directorate of the GID exercises a supervisory role over government agencies, and in some caces, the Directorate mediates between investors and government bodies to eliminate corruption practices that hinder investment.

The anti-corruption directorate runs a project titled "Strengthening the Capacity of Government and People to Act against Corruption" with the aim to expose the Department's staff to international best practices in fighting corruption and attend specialized training workshops.

Since its establishment, the Anti-Corruption Directorate has uncovered numerous cases of fraud that helped save the state treasury hundreds of millions of Jordanian Dinars (JD). As consequence, people, including non-Jordanians, were referred to courts, including civil servants. In addition, foreign nationals, mainly Arabs, have been expelled from the kingdom for fraud practices. The fraud cases involve bribes,

embezzlement of funds, the forgery of official documents, smuggling operations, tax evasion, and copyright infringements. Last but not least, middlemen who are trafficking in the illegal sale of kidneys and other human organs have also been arrested throughout the years.

GID's Fight against Terror

Most important, the GID carries out intelligence operations to protect the security of the state. Specifically, the GID maintains several special task forces devoted to specialized areas of intelligence, including counter-intelligence and communications surveillance. The government employs GID staff to monitor the security of government information systems and personnel.

Also critical, an anti-terrorism task force conducts operations to gather information on organizations working in Jordan and throughout the Middle East. It is not coincidence that Jordan has aided international anti-terrorism efforts and has repeatedly succeeded in foiling terrorist plots and dismantling terror organizations that planned to launch attacks in or outside of Jordan. Such organizations included, for example, Mohammad Army (1989), Bay'at Al-Imam Organization (1994), Khader Abu Hoshier (1999), Jordanian Afghans (2001), Reform and Defiance Movement (1998).

Jordan's geopolitical position has long made it a prey for terrorist activities targeting Jordanian and foreign nationals. For example in 2005, rockets aimed at two US warfare ships visiting the Jordanian port of Aqaba narrowly missed their targets. There were two claims of responsibility, both from groups believed to be affiliated with Zarqawi, then militant leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. In 2004, Jordan became target of the Al-Jayousi terrorist group that planned to unleash a Chemical Weapons attack within Jordanian proper. In late 2006, the Jordanian intelligence thwarted a bomb attack against foreign tourists traveling through Queen Alia International Airport in Amman. Several of the convicted conspirators were Iraqis.

Jordan has long experience in the fight against terrorism since Afghanistan became fertile ground for the first generation of jihadist groups, the second generation coming from Iraq and the third generation active in Syria. Given this reality, Jordan's efforts focus on the rule of law and the serve of democratic interests with the fight against terrorism through mechanisms and operations supported by GID. In fact, apart from its intelligence operations, Jordan's GID supports a four-track plan in the fight against terrorism.

The first track is Legislation. Jordan has endorsed in April 2014 the amendment of the 2006 anti-terror law that focuses on terror-related crimes and funding. The 2014 amended law foresees the death penalty for those who commit terrorist crimes that result in the death of people, partial or total damage of facilities, and use explosives, chemicals and radioactive materials. Financial activities in support of extremist groups, attempts for recruitment to terrorist organizations, and the creation of websites encouraging terrorist activities are penalized under the amended law.

The second track lies in Executive Measures. Following UNSC Resolution 1373 on countering terrorism, Jordan has taken a series of measures to comply with the resolution, including the adoption of the anti-money laundering Act of 2007. Jordan has also updated the specifications of personal identification documents in compliance with international safety standards, thus minimizing forgery risks.

The third track is based on Treaties and Conventions. Jordan is party to both formal and informal anti-terror treaties and conventions, and has contributed to a number of regional and international treaties with the aim to combat terrorism.

The fourth track highlights GID's cooperation with government ministries. A representative cooperation is with the interior ministry's program to contain jihadist ideology applied since 2007 to prisoners. Specifically, the program was applied on 27 inmates in 2007 and on 32 in 2008. The project includes religious lessons and interviews with scholars and imams to fight this ideology, through dialogues and by holding sessions of psychological counseling and social rehabilitation. Participants in the first sessions ended up getting rid of the extremist-jihadist ideology, whereas most of the participants in the 2008 sessions proceeded in the same direction.

Nowadays more than ever before, Jordan is in the eye of a storm as armed Salafi and jihadist groups and al-Qaida militants attempt to pour into the country from Syria. Because of this reality, Jordan employs its intelligence agency to mobilize regional and international cooperation with sister agencies based on defensive, operational and intelligence strategies to counter salafi-takfiri and jihadist groups emanating from crisis ridden Syria. Jordanian intelligence has foiled in 2012 a plot by an al-Qaida-linked cell to bomb its shopping centers and assassinate western diplomats using smuggled weapons and explosives from Syria. In late April 2014, the Jordanian air force destroyed vehicles transporting weapons to the kingdom from Syria. During the past year, Jordan's GID has intensified action to alert friendly countries and strategic allies on armed jihadist organizations active in Syria and the possible infiltration of militants to neighboring countries, through unannounced visits and meetings with security strategy makers and implementers in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, several European capitals and Washington.

Jordan's Intelligence in Public Opinion Perspectives

The main characteristic of the GID like all intelligence agencies is that they operate in secrecy, and unlike governments they do not seek popularity or public approval for their activities nor are they expected to seek popular ratings within public opinion. The secret nature of GID's tasks and duties limits the ability of any study to explore public opinion perspectives and restricts any opinion poll to general perceptions.

That said, a Jordanian research center has produced statistical evidence on the level of trustworthiness that GID enjoys within the public, and on relations between different branches of the Jordanian state, civil and military, not based on a single public opinion poll, but on an accumulating amount of data from polls conducted by the center the period 2001-2007.

The time of reference to examine any change in public perceptions are the Amman hotel bombings of 2005. However, it has to be acknowledged that even prior to the Amman hotel bombings, the Jordanian security apparatus enjoyed the highest level of trustworthiness within Jordanian public opinion. The World Value Survey in 2001 indicated that the Armed Forces, the Police, and the General Intelligence Department were the most trusted governmental institutions in Jordan. This can be seen in TABLE 1. Not only were these three institutions the highest ranking but also, along with the

government and the judiciary, they enjoyed a significant gap between them and other institutions in the kingdom.

TABLE 1
Level of Trustworthiness of Institutions (%)

Institution	Very Large Trustworthiness	Large Trustworthiness	Little Trustworthiness	No Trustworthiness at All
Armed Forces	63.5	28.9	6.6	1.0
Police	59.7	31.0	7.3	1.9
General Intelligence Department (GID)	57.2	32.5	7.2	3.1
The Judiciary	51.2	36.0	9.3	3.6
The Government	52.1	31.3	12.4	4.2
The Parliament	30.3	34.8	21.2	13.7
Jordanian Press	22.8	36.5	32.0	8.7
Jordanian Television	20.5	38.0	29.5	12.0
Political Parties	11.5	14.8	28.3	45.3

Source: The World Value Survey

The central role for maintaining Jordan as an oasis of security and stability in a troublesome region is attributed to the role of the GID. This central role was further imprinted in the mindset of Jordanians when the details of a foiled plot by the Al-Jayousi terrorist group in 2004 were made public. The thwarted plot aimed at crippling the Jordanian Intelligence through an attack on its Headquarters using tons of Chemicals, in addition to targeting the US embassy in Amman and the Prime Minister's office. The objective was to damage GID's facilities and image of a fortress agency, because of the agency's major role in combating terrorism on the national and regional levels. Accordingly, in the aftermath of the Amman hotel bombings in 2005, GID's central role became appreciated by Jordanian public opinion not only in the fight against terrorism, but in all aspects of political life in Jordan as it can be seen in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2 *National Sample (%)*

Rank the following institutions based on their importance in the Jordanian state.

	Percentage	Ranking
Prime Minister's Office	27.9	1
Armed Forces	26.1	2
General Intelligence Department	19.5	3
Public Security Directorate	13.4	4
Parliament	6.8	5
Ministry of Interior	6.2	6

Source: Jordanian research center

What is interesting to note is that the parliament has a limited impact in affecting public opinion. On the contrary, the Government represented by the Prime Minister's Office was ranked as the most important institution in the country.

In TABLE 3, it is shown that Jordanians have come to realise that the security and stability Jordan enjoys is no coincidence, but a result of the efforts of the Jordanian security apparatus, and the GID in particular. This perception has brought the agency that usually operates in secret and seeks no popularity or approval into the limelight as the first line of defence against groups that target Jordan. Evidently, the majority of Jordanians think that the GID has a large role within the Jordanian state.

TABLE 3 *National Sample (%)*

Do you think that the role of the General Intelligence Department in the affairs of the state is.....

	National Sample
Large	59.5%
Medium	29.4%
Small	6.4%
No role whatsoever	4.7%

Source: Jordanian research center

Even more interesting, as illustrated by TABLE 4, not only the national sample believes that the role of the GID is large, but the majority of Jordanians support the notion that this role should increase from its current state. And here, we have to underline the public's evaluation between the ranking of the government and the role of the intelligence department within the state. While government approval ratings as a state institution is high, so is the support for the role of the GID as guardian of the state, and thus of any of its democratic evolution.

TABLE 4 *National Sample (%)*

Do you support that this role should.....

	National Sample
Increase	56.2
Stay as it is	33.0
Decrease	6.6
There should be no role whatsoever	4.3

Source: Jordanian research center

This research is the first of its kind that is based on a huge data base from public opinion polls and surveys conducted in Jordan.

Coming to today's situation, the political and security chaos plaguing the region, and Syria in particular, necessitates the effectiveness of GID's role in safeguarding the security of Jordan and its state institutions, prerequisite for the kingdom's sustainable democratization. As American philosopher John Dewey once said "*The only freedom that is of enduring importance is the freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment, exercised on behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while*". And guarding or building democracy is worthwhile...

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